

# Folio Six

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## A Light Hold on Life <sup>1</sup>

*To cling to one's life,  
– To be possessive  
Of persons, pleasures, power or things –  
Is to 'lose' this life – that is ...  
To fail to embrace life-as-Mystery!  
... To reduce life's Wonder  
To a blinkered reality –  
To the trifles I treasure now,  
To current creature comforts,  
To my petty pattern of power-plays.  
What tragic blindness!  
It is to repeat one's past choices, again and again!  
It is to tighten our grip  
On a pretence of reality!*

*Alternatively,  
To have a light hold on life  
Is to live in a tender, ready attitude  
Of release  
... Able to surrender the urge to cling to persons  
And to favoured slivers of reality  
– Unintegrated segments of reality, with 'a life of their own'.  
To live in this attitude of release and surrender,  
Is to gain Life  
... To delight in the constant surprise of Mystery!  
... To be nourished by the ever-new faces of Love!  
... To be freed by trust in OTHERS, and in their gifts.  
It is to be nurtured by humankind's true way,  
The Way of Christ  
... Who surrendered all of Himself, to all of us!*

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<sup>1</sup> Written during a year of Religious Studies at University of Queensland while in St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace community, 1983

## Where One is None<sup>2</sup>

*A heart unmoved by suffering  
Is a heart not truly human ...  
A heart secured in its own strength  
A heart unsustained by the weaknesses of others  
– Unresponsive to the neediness of others –  
A heart enclosed in its own individuality  
A heart, reduced to self-ness, one-ness.  
But, in human terms, one is none:  
For one human being is meaningless.*

*To carry the sufferings of others  
Is to become-a-people:  
To become ENPEOPLED in Christ!*

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<sup>2</sup> Written during a year of Religious Studies at University of Queensland while in St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace community, 1983

## Lives Intersecting on the Cross<sup>3</sup>

*Jesus was like us in all things  
Except that He did not CAUSE suffering.  
Yet, paradoxically, He accepted suffering,  
Because it IS OUR needs, our pain, our weakness  
– In a word, our suffering –  
That is the critical point of intersection for human lives.*

*Suffering is Jesus' CHOSEN point of entry into our lives.  
Our lives intersect on the Cross.  
Sorrowfully, it was OUR cross He suffered on.  
But, since He never caused suffering  
– Unwilling ever to rupture human fellowship  
Or to further disjoint creation –  
It is only in Jesus Ascended  
That human fellowship can be re-sourced,  
And creation re-newed.*

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<sup>3</sup> Written during a year of Religious Studies at University of Queensland while in St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace community, 1983

## Jesus' Debt to Others<sup>4</sup>

*To relate in a truly human way  
Is to mutually ACCEPT the other's strengthening  
For our needs and weaknesses.  
It is also to WELCOME this reality  
Of mutual indebtedness,  
And thus, to let our lives,  
Flow unreservedly INTO each other's.*

*Jesus not only became  
More and more fully human in His relating,  
By welcoming such strengthening  
... From Mary and Joseph, from His Nazareth friends,  
From John the Baptist and from the Twelve ...  
But also very really –  
From those He helped  
From those He healed  
And from those sinners He forgave.*

*Each of these called forth  
More and more of His love,  
More and more of His compassionate humanity;  
So did the Pharisees and the Romans  
And His taunters on Calvary!  
In open-hearted ways,  
He deepened His humanity, through them.  
He learnt more and more,  
How essentially indebted He was  
To His own human kind!*

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<sup>4</sup> Written during a year of Religious Studies at University of Queensland while in St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace community, 1983

*Jesus learnt this lesson of love, both –  
From those whose lives of love touched His,  
And from those whose lives called forth  
His own human love.  
Within this, He profoundly deepened His conviction  
That the wellspring of ALL human love  
Has an Eternal Source.*

*His own life of love for others  
Became more and more the IMITATION  
Of Abba-Yahweh's deep, deep love for Himself  
... A love visibly evident in the affirmation  
Of those whose lives He embraced.  
Indeed, His open-hearted compassion for them,  
Beautifully mirrored  
The wondrous strengthening He felt from Abba  
... Especially the wonder of being FATHERED!  
... Having His whole reality sourced in His Abba!*

## En-Spiriting Others <sup>5</sup>

*The Spirit, in Christ Ascended,  
Empowers those who love  
So that they can en-Spirit others:  
Being empowered, they become sacraments of Christ's Gifting  
... Breathing the Spirit into others' lives.  
Just as we all, like Eucharistic ministers, can offer Christ  
Through a communion of hearts, to others ...  
So, through the service of humility and compassion,  
Identifying with the Paschal Christ,  
We can breathe forth, with Him, His Spirit  
... En-Spiriting others.*

*We, mostly, are unconscious of doing so  
... Not knowing 'whence the SPIRIT-WIND comes or where it goes', <sup>6</sup>  
Nor conscious of either giving or receiving It,  
Nor even of doing both MUTUALLY  
... If the Spirit also chooses to FLOW BETWEEN our lives!  
But of one thing, we are CERTAIN.  
We do so, IN CHRIST,  
And, as members of Christ's Body, IN THE CHURCH.  
We do so, in clear witness to our communal identity  
– And, ultimately, to build up Christ's Body.  
Indeed, en-Spiriting, and being en-Spirited,  
Can, thus, never be a private covenant  
... Although it may affect us in a deeply personal way.*

*Moreover, it is not something  
That happens once, or even occasionally.  
Rather, it is more of a continuing 'surrender-gift' of the Spirit,  
Between loving spirits,  
Who, in becoming ever more alive IN Christ Jesus,  
Give glory to the Father of us all ...  
By sharing Their Spirit!*

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<sup>5</sup> Prison Ministry at Woodford began while in Terrace community, November 1983. This is the first use of my long-term usage of En-Spiriting

<sup>6</sup> Jn 3:8



## Relating Through Weakness<sup>7</sup>

*Our needs issue out of our lack,  
... Out of our weaknesses, and negativity  
And yes ... out of our sin.  
Where we are needy, we can unite.*

*Especially in any deeper relationship,  
– When we are truthful  
About our needs,  
And yes, about our sin –  
Others BELIEVE us,  
And can relate to us, as we TRULY are!  
Deeper relating happens, when we are mutually needy!*

*In our relationships, our personal strengths  
Are there to serve the other's neediness and weakness  
... And their strength, serves our neediness.  
Thus, in a group,  
Our various strengths  
Serve the FELLOWSHIP of need, of weakness, of being sinners.*

*In a heartfelt, Christlike relationship,  
My need truly ATTRACTS the other's strength,  
And allows the other to feel truly USEFUL.  
Contrarivise, if we project ourselves as a 'tower of strength',  
... Wanting just to be admired, or to stay competitive  
Or NOT to be vulnerable ...  
Then we keep our relating shallow, and frustrate true union.*

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<sup>7</sup> Prison Ministry at Woodford began while in Terrace community, November 1983. I used this poem, in a 'secular' form, while conducting RELATIONSHIP COURSES, for many years, in Queensland prisons.

*Thus, our weaknesses, and yes, our sin,  
CAN be profoundly relational;  
And, from the sinner's point of view,  
We ought accept the other's strengths  
As GIFTS ... for uplifting my life.  
We ought not construe it as 'charity to a victim',  
Or as an opportunity for dictating change  
– But, as another chance to actively CHOOSE DEPENDENCE!*

*If we DO choose dependence,  
We gain a deeper respect  
For weakness, pain, and disjointedness  
– Both in ourself and in others.  
We see how it can become  
A template for our NEED OF GOD;  
And we experience, more deeply,  
The Presence of the crucified Jesus  
At the center of our weakness and sin,  
And co-experience with Jesus,  
His Spirit of Unity's EMPOWERING PRESENCE!*

## Suffering, Transcended and Transformed <sup>8</sup>

*Christians gathered in the Paschal Christ,  
Hope to INCORPORATE suffering and death, POSITIVELY,  
Within the very mainstream of life.*

*They believe that pain and suffering  
And the disjointedness of life itself,  
Largely arise out of humankind's evil  
– Because it is the evil in our hearts  
That deharmonizes and destabilizes  
Both our human and natural environments.*

*Even when pain and suffering  
Arise out of matures' turbulence  
Or out of life's 'random' accidents,  
It is the DEGREE  
Of evil or goodness in our hearts  
That shapes our deeper responsiveness  
To this – as with ALL – pain and suffering.*

*Committed Christians in accepting that Christ offers us  
A 'NEW HUMANITY', <sup>9</sup>  
Believe that IMITATING Christ comprehensively  
– Loving as He loved,  
Drawing ALL suffering, evil and death,  
Within a Christ-like embrace –  
TRANSFORMS all such experiences  
From what is human, to what is Divine.*

*The transcending effect of this entry of God into human life,  
Is to replace our human disharmonies  
With a unity that enables;  
And to replace our destabilization of creation  
With a creativity which re-integrates.*

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<sup>8</sup> Prison Ministry at Woodford began while in Terrace community, November 1983

<sup>9</sup> Eph 2:15

*Simply, Christlike lives  
Can be as truly redemptive as Christ's:  
In His 'sinful' humanity,  
Our brother Jesus, in His very PERSON,  
Was both CO-EXTENSIVE  
With all our suffering and evil  
And with a disjointed creation.  
In his 'new humanity',<sup>10</sup>  
Jesus Ascended's very PERSON  
Is now co-extensive  
With 'a new heaven and a new earth'<sup>11</sup>  
... Offering US  
A new identity and a new destiny!*

*Thus, for us, NOW ...  
The long-term repercussions of SIN  
– Within us, between us, and in creation –  
Can be transcended, transformed, and a cause for thanksgiving  
IF, we accept a new, graced identity with Christ!*

*Crucial to this re-birthing of humanity,  
Is our continuing personal – and Eucharistic – DESCENT  
Into Christ's suffering and death,  
And our continuing 'being raised up with Christ'<sup>12</sup>  
To a condition where tears, suffering and death  
'Are no more'<sup>13</sup>  
– Both personally and communally.*

*Thus, our co-identity with Christ in suffering  
Is REDEMPITIVE  
Both, for ourselves  
And – in the most selflessly integrative use of suffering –  
For OTHERS  
... And, regenerative for creation.*

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<sup>10</sup> Eph 2:15

<sup>11</sup> Rev 21:1

<sup>12</sup> Col 3:1

<sup>13</sup> Rev 21:4

## Limitlessly Lovable<sup>14</sup>

*I am most lovable,  
Uniquely lovable,  
Limitlessly lovable ...  
Because it is God  
– Who is love –  
Who loves me  
... Eternally.*

*This is the core,  
The very heart –  
Of my worth,  
Of my innate dignity  
– Being the beloved of God!  
Beloved, in The Beloved!*

*Being a son or daughter to God  
– A son or daughter in The Son –  
Divinizes my relationship  
... And with others, similarly fathered and brothered,  
Divinizes our humanity!*

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<sup>14</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

## Human Wholeness in Christ<sup>15</sup>

*We belong to each other;  
Together we are a channel of life to each other;  
Together we belong to God  
– The source of our togetherness.*

*Natural love between us  
Is a human affirmation of our human dignity;  
Graced love  
Is a divine affirmation of our human dignity  
– Of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dignity.*

*Such love is a graced quality of life we RECEIVE together  
– In Christ*

*It is also sharing ourselves, and sharing what we have  
– In Christ*

*... So together,*

*We grow towards human wholeness,  
Into that 'new', mature humanity  
Of becoming Christ, together!*

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<sup>15</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

## Beyond What Is Fair<sup>16</sup>

*Just as our faith in Abba is blind  
... Mirroring the Mystery that is God ...  
So too our justice must be open-ended,  
Not righteously 'balanced'  
... But moving far beyond human estimates  
Of what is fair and equitable,  
To reflect always  
The boundlessness of God's justice:  
Be compassionate  
As Your heavenly Father is compassionate'.<sup>17</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

<sup>17</sup> Lk 6:36

## Limitless Self-Revelation <sup>18</sup>

*Humankind forever seeks closure;  
– But, God’s ways are not ours!  
What Abba offers is DISCLOSURE  
... Of His own Reality  
– An ever-surprising  
Open-ended  
Limitless  
Self-Revelation  
And, with it,  
An invitation to us to share  
In His inner Fellowship <sup>19</sup>  
– With His radiant Word of Invitation,  
– And Their Spirit of Openness.*

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<sup>18</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

<sup>19</sup> See Note 2 in Poem 94



## Being Present<sup>20</sup>

*Within the peace of the Spirit,  
We need to be PRESENT –*

*To our PAST*

*With FAITH ... to proclaim the gifts God has given  
With humility ... to affirm that it is all God's work*

*To our PRESENT*

*With LOVE ... to treasure Abba's Face wherever it appears  
With surrender ... to fully offer each moment in the Spirit*

*To our FUTURE*

*With HOPE ... to be open to the Spirit's promptings  
With courage ... to trust in Abba's faithfulness.*

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<sup>20</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

## The Surprise of Grace <sup>21</sup>

*If we do not love ourselves,  
We project precisely this feeling onto others,  
And, by extension, onto God.  
For those times we can't accept God's love  
– Because we feel UNLOVABLE –  
We prefer to believe  
That God turns away  
From both the sin and the sinner.  
In reality it is I who turn ...  
From myself, from others, and from God  
– Instead of turning from my SIN!*

*In excusing myself thus  
I seek to justify further inaction  
And failure to take responsibility:  
– 'No one, not even God, cares for me  
... So what do I care?'*

*This encourages repetition of sin,  
And postpones the call to conversion.  
We become hostage to our own helplessness.  
We look for a way out.  
It is only the SURPRISE OF GRACE,  
The unexpectedness of the Spirit's promptings,  
And the realization that it is God  
Who EMPOWERS us to change  
That allows us to sense –  
'We must be of considerable WORTH  
... For God to be so insistently kind!'  
This newborn sense of worth  
Is the circuit breaker  
Which moves our hearts, once more,  
To feel loved,  
And to seek reconciliation.*

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<sup>21</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

## Sins of Omission<sup>22</sup>

*I was hungry  
And you DID NOT  
Give me to eat'<sup>23</sup>  
... Our pervasive sin  
Is the sin of OMISSION.*

*We arrange our life  
So as NOT TO HEAR  
The cry of the poor!*

*We skilfully skirt  
The mentally disabled,  
So that their mute call  
On our compassion,  
Is avoided.*

*We fake empathy,  
And speak in clichés  
– Just to avoid commitment!*

*We avoid eye contact,  
We turn up the music volume,  
We play 'busy',  
We pretend to converse  
– All to evade responsibility.*

*By quietly engaging in these stratagems,  
We stifle the Spirit's URGINGS  
... And we resort again,  
To tokenism, to studied neutrality,  
Or, simply, to crass self-interest.*

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<sup>22</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

<sup>23</sup> Mt 25:42

*... Or, moved by Jesus' plea,  
'Do not be afraid',<sup>24</sup>  
We can –  
Open our hearts,  
Let our conscience be triggered,  
Let our lives flow into theirs ...  
Sacrifice our time, energy, and resources,  
Let our lives be disturbed  
– Even re-orientated –  
As we re-focus on others.*

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<sup>24</sup> Lk 12:32

## Our Soaring Spirits<sup>25</sup>

*All matter*  
– *Cosmic matter, earthen matter*  
*Even our personal matter ... our bodily reality –*  
*Is, of its nature, finite, limited, closed:*  
*We sleep, because our energy is FINITE;*  
*We read, because our ability to gain and retain knowledge is LIMITED;*  
*We repeat the marriage act, because our delight reaches closure.*

*Contrariwise, our spirit, wondrously,*  
*Is not 'closed', at any stage, to further possibilities*  
– *Because, spirit is OPENNESS TO THE ABSOLUTE,*  
*And, decisively, every spirit can indwell every other – IF welcomed.*  
*Thus, when welcomed, whoever our spirit indwells*  
*... Either intensifies our spirit's openness, or has their openness intensified.*

*The very Presence of the purest, most perfect spirit*  
– *God's Spirit, the Spirit of Uniting*  
*Enables our spirit*  
*To open to the Absolute, itself.*  
*God's Openness thus activates our openness,*  
*Enabling our spirit's very RECEPTIVITY, to God's Spirit.*  
*Moreover, God's Spirit empowers without compelling:*  
*The Spirit of Uniting empowers us*  
*To FREELY receive Him,*  
*As Lord of our hearts!*

*Thus God is exquisitely in tune*  
*With the rhythms of our free spirits.*  
*Our free choices*  
*Are forever within the embrace of God's freedom:*  
*God's Spirit*  
*Freely and simultaneously wills*  
*Whatever good our spirit freely chooses.*

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<sup>25</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

*How marvellous, then, is God's creativity  
— In wedding  
Finite, limited, 'closed' matter, so seamlessly,  
To our soaring spirits!  
Free spirits, in soaring, are given wings  
By the very Presence of the Divine Spirit!*

## Shame and Forgiveness<sup>26</sup>

*If our shame, confusion and sorrow  
Are not RELATIONAL,  
If they do not draw us beyond ourselves to others  
... In repentance, in humble service, in forgiveness ...  
Then, they are not Spirit-inspired,  
But are caught up in my pre-occupation with others' opinions,  
Or with my self-guilt.*

*Forgiveness – by God and others,  
Links us to others IN THE PRESENT,  
And does not focus on one's own PAST.  
Moreover, true realization of sinfulness is God-directed,  
And always leads to gratitude, to the Spirit of Forgiveness.  
Simply, true self-worth is not found  
Through the deceit of self-affirmation,  
Rather, it must be gratefully RECEIVED, as gift,  
In the experience of Abba's forgiveness.  
His generosity causes true hearts  
To overflow with gratitude:  
Our renewal is God's work, not ours!*

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<sup>26</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

## The Once Tempted One<sup>27</sup>

*Humility comes through self-humbling ...*  
BEFORE *Abba's love, lavished on us, in Jesus*  
*Possesses us.*

*Humility blossoms into a desire for reconciliation ...*  
*It is GENTLY characterized by shame and self-humbling*  
*In the presence of others' GOODNESS*  
– *The face, for us, of God's GOODNESS.*

*Thus, it is the sheer power and beauty of Jesus Ascended's GOODNESS,*  
*Often manifest in the lives of others, through GRACE,*  
*... That fills our hearts with loving trust,*  
*... That fires us with a divine jealousy of others' obvious goodness,*  
*... And that invites us to walk, hand in hand,*  
*With Jesus Ascended.*

*This once tempted one, Calvary's Victor over sin,*  
*Companions us as we encounter evil on our life's journey,*  
*And strive, humbly, to imitate Him*  
*Who encourages us*  
*... To BE Him, to others.*

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<sup>27</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984



## For Poverty To Be Grace<sup>28</sup>

*For poverty to be grace  
Is to allow Abba, the fondest of sculptors  
To have His way with us.  
... It is to form us into treasured artworks of His love  
... To mould us into persons who are 'gentle and humble of heart'<sup>29</sup>  
... To shape our attitudes, our personalities,  
With His beloved Jesus, in mind  
– Into images of the poor man of Nazareth,  
The Beloved of His Father's heart!*

*Lovingly ...  
In the face of our self-focussed tendencies,  
Or in the face of our half-heartedness,  
Abba carefully incorporates some of Jesus'  
Calvary spirit, His overflowing generosity, into our lives.  
Yes, in the face of our smallness of mind  
Our stinginess of spirit,  
Abba embodies a lavish measure  
Of Jesus' self-sacrificing love!  
And in the face of our empty promises,  
And relentless self-focussing,  
Abba blends in  
A godlike measure of 'Not my will, but Yours be done'!<sup>30</sup>*

*Faithful to His desire to really capture  
The identity of One who was so 'poor in spirit',  
Abba re-moulds and re-shapes us  
As brothers and sisters  
Of the Paschal Christ.*

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<sup>28</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

<sup>29</sup> Mt 11:28

<sup>30</sup> Lk 22:42

*He does this so that we too might take up our cross daily,  
And sacrifice our lives, especially for the marginalized  
– Even for those who mistreat us!  
– And even for those who despise us!  
It is then that OUR poverty of spirit  
Will reveal itself AS GRACE.*

## For Obedience To Be Grace<sup>31</sup>

*For obedience to be grace,  
Is to allow Abba to transform us  
– As He did His Son Jesus –  
Within the accompaniment of our free choice  
... Through the ENABLING power of His Spirit of Love.*

*To be graced, our obedience  
Needs to be essentially PASCHAL :  
'To be of one mind with Christ'<sup>32</sup>  
... Who 'gave Himself up in our place,  
As a fragrant offering, and a sacrifice to God'.<sup>33</sup>  
It was to Abba He surrendered the ultimate choice,  
The choice of LIFE ITSELF,  
'Not my will but Yours be done!'<sup>34</sup>*

*Thus, through the humility of a true humanity,  
Jesus took obedience to its perfection:  
'Learning obedience, through what He suffered,  
He was made perfect'<sup>35</sup>  
... Thus making of His death, the most precious sacrifice  
– That of obedience!<sup>36</sup>*

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<sup>31</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984

<sup>32</sup> Phil 2:9

<sup>33</sup> Eph 5:2

<sup>34</sup> Lk 22:42

<sup>35</sup> Heb 5:8

<sup>36</sup> Heb 10:5-10

*Hence, it is through the enabling power  
Of Christ's own loving obedience  
That, sinfully human as we are  
– We achieve, DIVINELY beyond what we are capable of!  
We do so, with our free will  
Lovingly enshrined within His!  
We do so, with His Spirit, who ensures  
That 'all things work together for our good'!* <sup>37</sup>

*We do so, that 'together, we become Christ's body',* <sup>38</sup>  
*'So that each part,  
May be EQUALLY CONCERNED for all the others.'* <sup>39</sup>

*Thus our obedience, flowing out of Jesus',  
Leads to a fellowship of equality and concern.  
Blessed by God, it has truly become a fellowship of GRACE!*

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<sup>37</sup> Rom 8:28

<sup>38</sup> I Cor 12:27

<sup>39</sup> I Cor 12:25

## The Freedom of Dependence<sup>40</sup>

*To be 'IN Christ',  
We need to surrender our AUTONOMY  
Purchased, at great LOSS, by Adam and Eve!*

*Yes, we need to choose DEPENDENCE  
... To become re-dependent  
On each other, and on God  
... To be raised up, with Christ,  
To the freedom of dependence ...  
On an utterly creative  
And freeing God!*

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<sup>40</sup> Year 1, Prison Ministry, Woodford, from Gregory Terrace community, 1984